



News Release

For immediate release: May 5, 2015

(15-068)

Contacts: [Marqise Allen](#), Communications Office
[Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

360-236-4022

Pollution restricts shellfish harvest in Pierce, Mason and Whatcom counties

Declining water quality threatens 17 additional areas

OLYMPIA — State health officials are restricting shellfish harvesting in portions of three commercial growing areas due to high levels of fecal bacteria in the water. Another 17 areas are now defined as “threatened” due to declining water quality.

The actions are the result of the Department of Health’s annual evaluation of the state’s 102 commercial shellfish growing areas. National water quality standards are used to assess and classify Washington’s commercial shellfish harvesting areas. Sites are listed as “threatened” when bacteria levels are close to exceeding safe standards. This serves as an “early warning system” providing time to find and fix pollution sources before a closure is necessary. State and local agencies are already working to solve pollution problems in several of the affected areas.

“We have more work to do in the three downgraded areas, and the 17 shellfish growing areas now threatened with closure,” said Jerrod Davis, director of the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. “We’ll be working with our partners and ramping-up efforts to find and fix pollution sources in these areas. Despite our challenges, water quality restoration efforts continue to be successful overall – since 2007 there’s been a net increase of about 2,850 acres of harvestable acres.”

The downgraded areas are Hood Canal 6 (Alderbrook area, Mason County), Pickering Passage (McLane Cove, Mason County) and Vaughn Bay (Pierce County). Harvesting was also recently limited on about 500 acres of Portage Bay in Whatcom County. The “threatened” shellfish harvest areas include: Clallam County – East Straits; Grays Harbor County – Grays Harbor, Pacific Coast; Jefferson County – Hood Canal #3; King County – East Passage, Poverty Bay; Kitsap County – Port Orchard Passage; Mason County – North Bay; Pacific County – Bay Center, Naselle River, Nemah River; Pierce County – Rocky Bay, Vaughn Bay; Skagit County –

— More —

Pollution causes shellfish restrictions

May 5, 2015

Page 2

Swinomish; Snohomish County – South Skagit Bay; Thurston County – Henderson Inlet;
Whatcom County – Portage Bay.

State and federal funding has helped Puget Sound counties better manage sources of pollution to protect and restore shellfish harvest areas.

The Department of Health's Shellfish Program's goal is to make sure that shellfish harvested in the waters of our state are safe to eat.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

###